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SUBJECT: TEL AVIV RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT'S JUNE 5 PRAGUE
SPEECH

REF: SECSTATE 88465

¶1. Israel's status as a well-established democracy means that most of our public and media outreach on the Freedom Agenda is focused on promoting the functional integration of Israeli minorities -- particularly the Israeli-Arab community -- into the political system. As part of these efforts, the Ambassador met with leading democracy and human rights activists such as Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Imam Yahya Hendi, and Martin Luther King III to support their efforts to promote peace and democracy through multi-cultural and inter-faith dialogue.

¶2. In addition to his diplomatic engagement, the Ambassador regularly promotes democracy in his public remarks.

-- In his speech at our July 4 reception, attended by the Prime Minister and Acting President and carried live on Israeli television, the Ambassador stressed that both the United States and Israel were founded on the dream of democracy and a better life for all of their people.

-- In an event at Al-Qasemi Academic College, an Israeli Arab academic institution, the Ambassador noted that "experience has taught us that healthy democracies require the constant and dedicated work of engaged, active, knowledgeable citizens." He recognized that "Israel is not alone in facing fateful questions that sometimes bring the majority's real need for a feeling of security into conflict with the principle of fair treatment for 'the other,'" but emphasized that in the United States "we have grappled with questions of ethnic diversity and we have a rich history of overcoming racial prejudice and discrimination," which he went on to discuss.

-- In an interview in the spring with Lilac Magazine, an Arabic-language magazine with a high circulation in the Israeli Arab sector, the Ambassador expressed his view that "the Arab community in Israel can be an immense asset for the country, because if Israel wants to live in peace with its neighbors it first must live at peace with its own Arab community." He suggested that in a democracy like Israel "the Arab community can serve as a bridge between Israel and the Arab world.... In other words, they can become 'diplomats.'"

¶3. A number of Embassy programs and initiatives supported the Ambassador's outreach efforts.

-- Active MEPI grants to Israel's Arab community include a project to increase Arab-sector representation on the boards of government-owned corporations and another to strengthen leadership and encourage political participation at the municipal level.

-- Israeli participants in this summer's American Council of Young Political Leaders program included an Israeli-Arab, our

standard practice for this program.

-- Our ACCESS micro-scholarship program that provides supplemental English-language training to Israeli-Arab students contributed this year to a significant increase in the college entrance exam scores of program graduates, more of whom are attending university and establishing the civic and financial foundations for meaningful participation in Israeli democracy.

-- Speakers participating in PD programs frequently address questions of effective minority participation in democracy. For example, earlier in the year Harvard Law School Professor Charles Ogletree and University of Rhode Island Professor Bernard LaFayette made separate visits to Israel to address the political empowerment of minorities and the effective use of democracy to advance minority rights. Both noted that, despite the human imperfections embedded in a system that depends on the will of the people, democracy's malleability and openness to change make it the best vehicle for long-lasting political and social advancement.

-- PD, POL and USAID met with the Seeds of Peace President Nicolla Hewitt on July 19 to discuss strategies and potential partners for the organization's initiative promoting peace and coexistence.

-- As part of his work with the large Russian immigrant community in Israel, the Embassy's Human Rights Reporting Officer met with exiled Russian dissidents active in the "Other Russia" coalition.

14. By decision of the Forum's organizers, Israel is not a participant in the Forum for the Future at this time.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

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